

AN UNLIKELY CANDIDATE

by Rabbi Aron Tendler

This week's Parsha is the story of Moshe's development from birth to greatness. At first glance, the fear and intrigue that surrounded his birth fascinate us. The prevailing political climate was overtly anti-Semitic, and there was a death decree in force over all newborn males. Moshe's parents, Amram and Yocheved, as the acknowledged leaders of the enslaved nation, were under close scrutiny and surveillance. His birth was 3 months premature, and there were indications that he would be even greater than his older siblings, Miriam and Aharon. He was set afloat in the rushes along the Nile, and rescued by the kind daughter of the evil, and oppressive king. Immediately returned to the care of his loving birth mother, Moshe was raised in the palace of the King and nurtured by both his adopted mother and birth mother. He matured with an understanding of his unique position as Egyptian prince and Jew as well as its potential for saving his people. To the discerning eye, the guiding hand of Hashem was revealed for all to see as He prepared the means for Israel's eventual redemption.

Starting with Pasuk 2:11, everything fell apart. After killing the Egyptian overseer and being exposed as a "mole" in the palace of Pharaoh, Moshe was branded as the worst possible traitor and forced to flee for his life. Sixty years passed before Hashem (G-d) revealed Himself to Moshe in the Burning Bush. During that time the Egyptian oppression increased to new levels of intolerance and the hope for the "Jew who would be King" was remembered as a cruel and painful joke. Moshe's personal experiences in living apart from his family and people created an obvious schism between himself and the nation. No longer could he claim to be a part of the national experience. No longer could he assume that the people would accept him as the Redeemer.

Hunted by Pharaoh, divorced from his people's pain, and to top it all, unable to "speak clearly", Moshe is the most unlikely of all candidates to free the Jews. Nevertheless, it was Moshe who would say to Pharaoh, "Let my People go!" All bets were against Moshe succeeding. A far better choice would have been his brother Aharon. Aharon too was born into the royal family of Amram and Yocheved. However; Aharon was loved and admired by the people with whom he had shared the years of oppression and pain. Aharon was not on the Egyptian "10 most wanted list". Aharon could speak clearly and eloquently. Aharon was the logical choice for redeeming the Jews, and Moshe himself said as much to Hashem! (4:13) Why did Hashem insist on sending Moshe?

In the on going discussion with Hashem, it becomes clear why Hashem chose Moshe, the unlikely choice, over Aharon, the more obvious candidate. Moshe had a two-fold mission. a) Teach the Jews

that there was a G-d. b) Teach the Jews that G-d cares for them, and that they are completely dependent on Him. As the next 40 years would prove, it was far easier to teach them that G-d existed than it was to teach them that G-d truly cared for them. G-d's existence would be shown through miracle after miracle. G-d's caring could only be demonstrated through His consistent presence and daily involvement in the lives of the nation. This meant that the people had to credit G-d with the miracles that became daily occurrences in the desert, such as water from rocks and bread from heaven. Moshe argued to Hashem that by sending a human to do G-d's bidding, Hashem was undermining His own goal. It would be far more direct and powerful if G-d Himself, without any human intermediary, would save the Jews from Mitzrayim (Egypt). Then, the Jews would credit their redemption and maintenance to Hashem alone, and not to the presence of a leader or intermediary. In fact, the next 40 years proved Moshe's concerns accurate as the nation struggled to develop a personal relationship with the Creator and see beyond Moshe's presence as leader and intermediary.

Hashem told Moshe that, although his concerns were well founded, Hashem's methods include the presence of intermediaries. Therefore; in as much as Moshe's concerns were accurate, Moshe's mission was to teach the Bnai Yisroel (Children of Israel) that he, Moshe, was fundamentally insignificant even as his very involvement as intermediary increased his significance and the people's dependency on him. However; in order to facilitate Moshe's own insignificance and foster the nation's dependency upon Hashem, Moshe was the perfect candidate! The very illogic of his candidacy proved that Hashem and not Moshe was responsible for the miracles of redemption! Whereas Pharaoh should have immediately imprisoned Moshe, the most wanted man in Egypt, Moshe came and went with complete impunity. Whereas the people should have shunned Moshe's claim to leadership because of his long absence and disassociation from their pain and suffering, Moshe was immediately accepted as the divinely appointed, long awaited, Redeemer! However; regarding Moshe's inability to speak clearly, Moshe himself undermined his own mission. It was Moshe's reluctance, sensitivity, and developing humility, that brought into the process, not just one intermediary, but two!

In Pasuk 4:10, Moshe put forth his final argument. "I am unable to properly convey your teachings because of my speech impediment!" Hashem answered (4:11), "Who do you think created the power of speech or hearing? Is it not I - G-d?" Moshe then answered (4:13), "Please send someone more appropriate, send my brother Aharon!" (Rashi 4:13) Hashem then got angry with Moshe and said (4:14), "O.K.! You want me to include Aharon, I'll include him. However, not only isn't it necessary for Aharon's sake, it will make your ultimate mission more difficult. By bringing Aharon into the process of redemption and miracles the people will be even further disassociated from Me, Hashem!" (4:15) The greatest proof of Moshe's personal insignificance would have been the miracle of his ability to only speak clearly when conveying the word of G-d! Instead, the people heard Hashem's words as they were conveyed from Hashem to Moshe, and from Moshe to Aharon.

In the end, Moshe accomplished his mission of directing the nation's dependency toward G-d and away from himself. However, in the process, Moshe had to become the the most humble of all men, the Jews would sin with the Golden Calf; and Moshe would never enter the Promised Land. (Think about it!)

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